

"The Rest Available in Jesus Christ"

Part 1

Hebrews 3:7-4:16

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study in Hebrews we have now come to a very interesting part of the letter. The section we are about to study will focus upon the rest that is available to the believer in Christ.

Now in chapter 3 we have already looked at verses 1-6 and in these verses the writer has explained to his readers that Jesus is superior to Moses. Let us remember that the Jews saw themselves as disciples of Moses. In their minds Moses was highly exalted because of his service to God. But the writer made it clear that Jesus was superior to Moses. Moses was faithful in his house/nation of Israel but Jesus had built the house.

Hebrews 3:2-4

² *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.*

³ *For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.*

⁴ *For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.*

The writer then went on to explain that while Moses was faithful to God as the leader of Israel he was faithful as a servant. Jesus was also faithful to His house/the church as our High Priest and Apostle and He was faithful as a Son.

Hebrews 3:5-6a

⁵ *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;*

⁶ *But Christ as a son over his own house;*

Then the writer addressed the hearts of his readers.

Hebrews 3:6

⁶ *But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

This statement was intended to cause them to look deep within their hearts. Let us remember that these Jewish believers were contemplating going back into Judaism because of the persecution which they were facing. This letter is written to encourage

them to move forward in their walk. This statement in Hebrews 3:6 was intended to cause them to examine their own faith to be sure it was real.

Now the writer is going to continue with the thoughts from verses 1- 6 in his mind and he is going to give to them a warning. This will be the second warning found in the book of Hebrews.

The first warning had to do with the danger of neglecting the "so great salvation" of God. This second warning will deal with the danger of neglecting the "so great sufficiency" of God.

I. The Warning

Notice Hebrews 3:7

The first word of this verse takes us back to what the writer had just covered in 1-6, but namely what he had recorded at the end of verse 6. The previous thought was that we are saved if we continue to hold fast to hope that we have in Jesus Christ. This is one of the thoughts the writer is carrying forward.

Now it is very important to notice that the word "therefore" connects to verse 12.

Notice Hebrews 3:7 and 12.

There is a parenthesis that starts in verse 7 and goes through verse 11. This parenthesis is an Old Testament quote from Psalm 95:7-11. These are words recorded by David that describe the wilderness wanderings of Israel under the leadership of Moses. In this Old Testament passage there is a warning for the readers of this letter. The warning is not just for the original readers but it is for ALL who would read and study the letter.

Let us now look closely at what the warning is. Let me just remind you that the warning is taken from the wilderness wanderings.

Notice Hebrews 3:7-8

The first point we see about this warning is that it is pertinent. The warning is given by the Holy Spirit and it pertains to TODAY or any day in which this passage is read. The exhortation is that the reader is not to harden his or her heart when God, through His Word speaks to them.

The example which the writer uses is how Israel hardened their hearts when they followed God out of Egypt and into the wilderness on the way to Canaan.

There are 2 words in verse 8 that we need to define that will help us to understand what the writer is saying here.

1. **Provocation** - This word comes from a root word that means "to provoke", "to irritate" or "to make bitter". Ultimately it refers to the "rebellion" of Israel in the wilderness. We will see what the writer means in the next couple of verses.
2. **Temptation** - This word refers to "a testing" or "a proving".

Notice Hebrews 3:9

This is the day of temptation which the writer is talking about. It was in the wilderness that the nation of Israel tested God, they proved God, and they were eyewitnesses to His provisions. Now let me pull some thoughts together here that will help us to see the point the writer is making.

There were times in the wilderness that the faith of the Israelites was tested. Their faith was tested the day they stood at the edge of the Red Sea as the Egyptian army closed in from behind.

Exodus 14:10-13

¹⁰ *And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.*

¹¹ *And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?*

¹² *Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

¹³ *And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.*

Their faith was tested in Exodus 16 when they had very little food.

Exodus 16:1-3

And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

² *And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:*

³ *And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

Their faith was tested in Exodus 17 when they came to Rephidim and had no water.

Exodus 17:1-3

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

² *Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?*

³ *And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?*

These are just 3 of the times when the faith of Israel was tested and in each of these situations they were permitted to see the sufficiency and the faithfulness of God. These people were eyewitnesses to God's sufficiency for 40 years. God brought the plagues on Egypt, He parted the Red Sea, He brought manna from heaven, and He brought water from the Rock. He kept their clothing from wearing out for 40 years. They were shown the faithfulness of God.

When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

But even though they were eyewitnesses to the faithfulness of God many of them refused to trust God and they complained against God over and over again. This was the "provocation" the writer spoke of in verse 8. They constantly rebelled against God.

Notice Hebrews 3:10

Many of the generation of the Israelites which came out of Egypt grieved the heart of God because of their lack of faith. This verse tells us that they never came to know the ways of God. Let me now take you back to verse 8 again.

⁸ ***Harden not your hearts***, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Here was the problem. They continued to harden their hearts. But this raises a question: How does a person harden his or her heart? Here is the answer: By refusing to repent of sin that is made known to them. Let me explain something about the people of Israel who journeyed through the wilderness. They not only saw the sufficiency of God and the miracles of God. But they also saw the judgment of God. Remember the consequences in Numbers 14 when they refused to enter the land?

Numbers 14:29

²⁹ *Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me.*

Numbers 2:32

³² *These are those which were numbered of the children of Israel by the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps throughout their hosts were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.*

There would be 603,550 numbered men die in the wilderness over 38 years. These people knew the judgment of God but they lived as though it would never happen to them. They hardened their hearts and continued to live in disobedience.

Notice Hebrews 3:11

This is a very frightening verse. These people had rebelled long enough that God swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest which was the land of Canaan. There was a time when they crossed the "line" and it was impossible to go back.

II. **The Application**

Part 1

Now before we look at the next verse there is something that we need to understand. The writer is writing to people who were professing believers.

Notice Hebrews 3:1

We see here that this entire section is addressed to "holy brethren". So they are people that have professed to know Jesus Christ.

Notice Hebrews 3:12

Now let us remember that this verse comes after the word "wherefore" in verse 7. So the thought in the mind of the writer is what he said in verse 6 about the mark of true salvation.

Here in Hebrews 3:12 the writer tells them to take heed. He is concerned that there could be an evil heart of unbelief in them. There are some words here that we need to look closely at.

Evil - This is an active form of evil. John Phillips says this is an evil that is not content unless it drags others down.

Departing - This word means "to stand off from". It is from this word in one of its forms that we get the word "apostasy" from. Let me show you what John Phillips says concerning these 2 words:

"The "evil heart of unbelief" was the root: the "standing off" was the fruit: the problem is seen in the one and the proof in the other."

Now let me explain one of the writer's concerns here. He was concerned that while these Hebrews professed to be saved he was concerned that maybe some were not. Remember they were considering going back to Judaism and the writer has already told them that true faith will not let go of the hope in Christ. He will reinforce this again in verse 14.

For them to turn their back on the Truth of the New Testament would reveal they were never saved to begin with. No matter what their profession might be their actions would manifest what was truly in their hearts.

Now let me raise a question here. Why did the writer use the example of Israel in the wilderness? I believe there was one main reason and it addresses the second concern of the writer. In the beginning of this chapter the writer took time to show how Jesus was superior to Moses. Then he points to the rebellion and the consequences of rebelling against God under the leadership of Moses which came upon the people of Israel.

So if there were severe consequences for rebelling as members of the "house" of Moses, how much more serious would it be for them as members of the "house" of Jesus who is superior to Moses?

Jesus had died for their sins and on the 3rd day He rose from the grave. Jesus affirmed His message with many miracles while He walked the earth and the resurrection solidified every claim that Jesus made. Through Jesus God had proved His faithfulness. It was through Jesus that eternal life was possible. It was in Jesus that they were absolutely secure. It was in Jesus that they had an eternal hope that no one could take away.

So to not trust God in the midst of the persecution they were facing would carry some very serious consequences. God had certainly proved His faithfulness and sufficiency in Christ.

The consequence for the Hebrews who were truly saved would be that they too would not be permitted to enter into God's rest. They were saved by faith and they were required to live by faith. This is what we will see as we move in the weeks to come.

Hebrews 4:1

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Conclusion:

Let us remember that as we pass through this world our faith will also be tested. But God has proved His sufficiency and His faithfulness in Christ and we have it all recorded in the Scriptures. Therefore we are called to live by faith no matter what we face.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.